RAJANIGHANTU–AN IMPORTANT LEXICON OF PRE—BHAVAPRAKASHA ERA

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ABSTRACT
Charakasamhita and other Ayurvedic classics have documented useful information for treating various ailments. With the passage of time, the scholars of Ayurveda produced several works giving preference to easily adoptable simple herbal recipes. Since herbs occupy the important place, the writers started compiling lexicons with the details about drugs in terms of synonyms, pharmacological attributes and therapeutic indications. Out of all the Nighantus (lexicons), Dhanvantarinighantu, Bhavaprakashanighantu and Rajanighantu have become popular among Ayurvedic practitioners. Rajanighantu which is also referred as Nighanturaj (king of lexicons) has commanded a greater recognition as the first Nighantu which has included vernacular name of different herbs. Acharya Priyavrat Sharma opines that Rajanighantu belongs to 17th century since it contains description of Jhandu (Marigold flower) which has entered into India at the end of 16th century AD. Since Rajanighantu quotes Madanapalanighantu (1374 AD), and included the descriptions of Peetakaraveera already mentioned in Kayyadevanighantu (1425 AD) and the work was translated into English by Filippo sassetti (1540-1588), a Florentine merchant, lived in Goa, the period of Rajanighantu may be considered at the end of 15th century.

Key words: Ayurvedic lexicon, Rajanighantu, Bhavaprakashanighantu

INTRODUCTION
Rajanighantu–an important lexicon of Ayurvedic materia medica is also known by the name Abhidhanachudamani and Dravyabhidhanaganasamgraha[1]. The author has given his identity within the lexicon[2] and referred himself as Kashmiri Narasimha Pandit at the outset and referred his name as Narahari Pandit in rest of the text. The author claims that he is well versed in 18 languages. Bapalal Vaidya opines that the author of Rajanighantu could be a South Indian, observing the synonyms of medicinal plants mentioned in various vernacular languages of South India in the book[3]. According to the author, drugs already mentioned in other texts which are therapeutically less important were excluded from this lexicon. Further, the author has compiled most important drugs which are included in the Nighantu part while the less important ones are included under Ekarthadivarga. At the beginning of the work, the author humbly stated that he has referred Nighantus (lexicons) and Koshas (dictionaries) such as Dhanvantarinighantu, Madanapalanighantu, Halayudha, Vishwaprakash, Amarakosha, Sesha and Rajakosha for compilation of his work[2].

TIME PERIOD
Author has not given any evidence regarding the time period of his work. Prof. H. H. Wilson puts him in the 12th or 13th century and says that he belonged to Deccan as he has mentioned various names of plants in Maharashtri and Karnataki languages[3]. Bapalal Vaidya considered that Rajanighantu was written either at the end of 14th century or at the beginning of 15th century[3] which has been also endorsed by Acharya Viswanath Dwivedi [7]. But according to Udayachand’s conjecture, he lived in the year 1725 of the Samvat era[4] (i.e. 1668 AD). Acharya Priyavrat Sharma also opines that Rajanighantu should be considered as the work of post-Bhavaprakash period i.e. 17th century. He furnished the following reasons in support of his opinion.[5]

Peetakaraveera – Bhavamishra indicated only two varieties[6] of Karaveera i.e. Sweta (white) and Rakta (red) which was similar to description of Dhanwantrynighantu[8] and Madanapalanighantu[9], while Rajanighantu[10] indicated four varieties namely Sweta, Rakta, Peeta (yellow) and Krishna (black). Basing on this evidence, PV Sharma opines that another variety Peetakaraveera belonging to America was introduced into India during post Bhavaprakash period i.e. 16th century AD and it was...
Kulanjana: PV Sharma opined that Kulanjana which is mentioned by Narhari was referred by Bhavamishra as Mahabhari-vacha. This evidence cannot stand for reasoning which can be interpreted vice-versa. In addition, both drugs should be considered separately as the synonyms and properties of them are not absolutely similar.

— Dwipantaravacha (Chopchini): He further stated that the drug Himavali mentioned in Rajanighantu could be Dwipantaravacha - a drug of Bhavaprakasahanighantu. It is a historical fact that Bhavamishra has introduced a new drug i.e. Dwipantaravacha and indicated it in Phirangaroga (syphilis), a new disease described for the first time by him. Further while comparing Himavali with Dwipantaravacha, he also quotes a different version equating it with Revandchini. A perusal about the indications given for Himavali clearly indicates that the conditions like Upadamsha or Phirangiroga were not included for this drug. It is referred under Pippalyadivarga with a synonym- Kushtaghi and indicated in severe pruritus. So, Dwipantaravacha cannot be equated with Himavali. Both are separate drugs and may not help to establish the period of Rajanighantu.

— Jhandu: Marigold- a flowering plant which was introduced in India from 17th century is used only for ornamental purpose while Jhandu in Rajanighantu mentioned for fever and psychotic disorders (Grahabadha). So, Jhandu of Rajanighantu may not be interpreted as Marigold.

Acharya Priyavrat Sharma has recorded his observation on Bhavaprakashasamhita and expressed that Bhavamishra has referred in total 51 works including “Rajanighantu”. He further endorses that Bhavamishra might have adopted the classification of Audbhidadravya (vegetable drugs) denoted by Rajanighantu i.e. Vanaspati, Vaanaspata, Kshupa, Valli and Aushadhi. Observations made by Acharya P.V. Sharma appear to be self-contradictory for establishing the time period of Rajanighantu. Since there is no common consensus among these scholars about the time period of Rajanighantu, there is a need to determine the period of it based on external and internal evidences.

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE
Important information quoted in the book entitled “Light from the orient” written by Swami Tathagatananda gives strength for establishing the period of Rajanighantu. The details quoted in the book are “Filippo Sassetti (1540-1588), a Florentine merchant, lived in Goa, South India between 1583 and 1588. In 1585, Sassetti was surprised to discover that Hindu scholars wrote and used an ancient language called Sanskrit, previously unknown in the West. He chanced to notice a relationship between Sanskrit and his native Italian language, while translating the book, Rajanighantu, a medical treatise. Sassetti was the first to propose a definite relationship between Sanskrit and the major European languages”. This evidence implores to place Rajanighantu earlier to 16th century and serves as an upper limit of time frame.

INTERNAL EVIDENCE
Referral system of common synonyms for many drugs (Anekarthavarga) was introduced by Kaiyadevanighantu which is actually missing in currently available text. Further, Rajanighantu and Bhavaprakasahanighantu presented Anekarthavarga in a comprehensive way. The analysis of Anekarthavarga described by both the works may help to decide the period of Rajanighantu. In Anekarthavarga, Bhavamishra quoted synonyms- Indri for Nirgundi; Balapatra for Yavasa; Deerghamoola for Yavasa and Shaliparni; Sitashiva for Mishrey; Krishna for Nili; Tamrapushpi for Shyama Trivrat; and Palasha for Patraka, but these synonyms are not found in respec-
tive description of these drugs in Nighantu portion of Bhavaprakasha[18]. Further, these all synonyms are furnished for those drugs in Rajanighantu. It can be opined that Bhavamishra picked up synonyms form Rajanighantu while furnishing Anekarthavarga. Based on this evidence, period of Rajanighantu should be placed in pre-Bhavaprakasha era.

The author has quoted in the introduction of his work that he referred Nighantus (lexicons) and Koshas (dictionaries) such as Dhanvantarinighantu (10th AD), Madanapalanighantu (14th AD), Halayudha, Vishwaprakash, Amarakosha (10th century), Sesha (12th) and Rajakosha for compilation of his work[2]. This internal evidence clearly helps to fix the lower limit of this work i.e. 1374 (14th century- period of Madanapalanighantu)

CONTRIBUTION MADE BY THE AUTHOR

— Rajanighantu is the first work to incorporate the information about Nakshatravriksha (trees with specific affinity to 27 stars according to Indian Astrology). Narahari Pandit further mentioned that the information with regard to Nakshatravriksha is very vast and admitted his inability to include the total information with a view to keep the work concise.

— In ten Vargas (classifications) Narahari has mentioned about 780 vegetable drugs, excluding 74 of the Suwarnadi Varga (metals, jewels etc.)[3]. Critical analysis indicates that number of plants delineated in these Vargas is more in comparison to earlier works. The author furnished the vernacular names of these plants with fixed number of synonyms. Vernacular names of drugs in Karnataka, Maharashtra, Andhra and Lata languages are furnished in this nighantu. This is the only Nighantu which quotes the vernaculars of drugs mentioned in Ayurvedic materia medica.

— He is the first author who identified and portrayed about the basic human instincts in Vrikshas like appetite, thirst and sleep.

— Reflection of Panchamahabhutas in trees was also narrated such as - hardness (katinata) represents Parthivamsa, moisture (Ardrata) represents Jaleeyamsa, heat (Ushna) represents Tejasamsa, growth (Vardhanatva) represents Vayavamsa and hallowness & holes (Chidratva) represent Nabhasansa components.

— According the author ethnobotanical claims must be analyzed with the help of Ayurvedic principles (Rasadi lakshanadi) before their clinical administration.

— Concept of coining the synonyms basing on Prabhava, Desha (habitat) etc. was denoted by the author for the first time basing on i.e. Rudhi-Swabhava-Desha-Lanchana-Upama-Virya-Itaradesha.

— Sharngadhara has considered five[19] Avastha (different states of the drugs) in each Dravya i.e. Rasa, Guna, Virya, Vipaka and Prabhava while Rajanighantu accepted only three Gunas i.e. Rasa, Virya and Vipaka for explaining drug action.

— Rajanighantu has furnished eight branches (Ashtanga) of Ayurveda which is different from Samhita-grantha. Two new branches such as Dravyabhidhana and Gadansichaya were included in it while Shalakya merged within Shalyadi and Vajeekarana merged within Rasayana branches. Probably basing on Rajanighantu, the author of Vaidyakasabadindhu (1914) has enumerated Dravyabhidhanam, Gadansichaya, Kayachikitsa, Shalya, Bhutanigraha, Vishanigraha, Rasayana and Balachikitsa under Ashtangas of Ayurveda.

CONCLUSION

Rajanighantu is considered as one of the major lexicons in Ayurvedic materia medica. Author of Rajanighantu added many Ayurvedic concepts like Nakshatravriksha, recognition of basic human instincts in Vrikshas, Reflection of Panchamahabhutas in trees etc, to enrich Ayurvedic materia medica. Dravyaguna and Roganidana have been enumerated under Ashtanga Ayurveda by the author of Rajanighantu. Concept of coining of synonyms for a particular drug also explained firstly in it.
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Author has mentioned some information about himself but period of work has not been specified. There is no common opinion with regards to time period of Rajanighantu between Ayurvedic scholars and historians who placed the work from 13th century to 17th century. Internal evidence based on the descriptions of drugs like Peetakaraveera, Himavali, Kulanjana etc. cannot help directly to determine the period of Rajanighantu. Whether Jhandu mentioned by Rajanighantu can be interpreted as Gendaphool (Marigold- a flowering plant introduced into India during 17th century) or not is yet to be confirmed.

The author of Rajanighantu has mentioned Madanapalanighantu (1374 AD) in the list of consulted works. Basing on this internal evidence it should be placed after 14th century AD. Filippo sassetti (1540-1588), a Florentine merchant of Goa translated it into English. Basing on this external evidence Rajanighantu should be earlier to 16th century and need not be considered as the work of post-Bhavaprakasa period.

In view of both internal as well as external evidences it can be concluded that Rajanighantu belongs to 15th century AD, and should be considered as an earlier work to Bhavaprakashanighantu.

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Conflict of Interest: None Declared
Source of Support: None